Stonington [Ms.] Stonington Baptist Association 2

MINUTES

OF THE

Stonington Association,

Convened at Groton, October 18th and 19th,

1796.

Tueſday, October 18th.

THE Elders and Brethren, Meſſengers of the Churches, met at Elder Timothy Wightman's Meeting-Houſe, and

1. Brother Stephen Olmſted delivered a diſcourſe from 1. John, iii. 2.—"*Beloved, now are we the ſons of God.*"

2. After worſhip proceeded to buſineſs. Choſe brother Abel Palmer, Moderator, and brother Aſa Spalding, Clerk.

3. Letters from the Churches were read.

N. B. Miniſters' names in capitals. Licenſed preachers in italics. Thoſe to whoſe names an * is affixed, were not preſent. From churches marked thus †, we had no letters. Daſhes ——— denote no ſettled miniſter.

Churches.	*Miniſters and Meſſengers.*	Added.	Diſmiſ.	Exclud.	Dead.	Numb.
1ſt. Stonington,	——— ———,		1		4	138
	* *Peleg Randal,*					
	Jabiſh Gallup,					
	Henry Hewit,					
2d. Stonington,	SIMEON BROWN,			3		203
	Aſa Spalding,					
	Daniel Main,					
	Aſher Miner,					
3d. Stonington,	VALENT. W. RATHBUN,	1	2			43
	Elnathan Fellows,					
	David Minor, jun.					
Groton,	TIMO. WIGHTMAN, (a)	1			5	178
	Peter Avery,					

(a) This venerable miniſter, departed this life, Nov. 14, 1796, *in the* 78*th year of his age, and* 42*d of his miniſtry.*

"*Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaſeth: for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*" David.

"My father, my father, the chariot of Iſrael and the horſemen thereof." *Eliſha.*

		Added.	Dismit.	Exclud	Dead.	Numb.
	Benadam Gallup, jun.					
	Samuel Lamb,					
Saybrook,	* ELIPHALET LESTER,					30
	Iſrael Douglaſs,					
	Benjamin Watrous,					
Exeter,	——— ———,	10	3		4	229
	Pardon Tillinghaſt,					
	Joſeph Tiſdale,					
	Jonathan Dean,					
† Church formerly of South Kingſton, now of Richmond.	* BENJAMIN BARBER, (*b*)					67
†Weſt Greenwich,	* ELISHA GREEN,					49
1ſt. Colcheſter,	* CHRISTOPHER PALMER,	2	3		1	60
	Abram Randal,					
	Aſa Randal,					
2d. Colcheſter,	——— ———,		1			87
	John Carty,					
	Alpheus Rogers,					
	James Rogers,					
Richmond,	——— ———,		2		1	34
	Sands Perkins,					
	Gideon Babcock,					
Hampton,	ABEL PALMER,			1		67
	William Eliott,					
	Thomas Grow.					
Montville,	REUBEN PALMER,	1		2	1	50
	Jehiel Rogers,					
1ſt. Chatham,	——— ———,				1	60
	Caleb Tenant,					
	Ebenezer Harris,					
2d. Woodſtock,	AMOS WELLS,					69
	Iſaiah Lyon,					
2d. Chatham,	——— ———,	12	9	7		65
	Squire Goff,					
	Samuel Arnold,					
New-London,	ZADOCK DARROW,	5		4	3	271
	Lemuel Darrow,					
	Nehemiah Dodge,					
	Charles Brown, jun.					
† 2d. Aſhford,	* JOHN RATHBUN,					52
† 3d. Aſhford,	——— ———,					32
	* *David Bolles.*					
Eaſt-Haddam,	SIMEON DICKINSON,	1				48
	Joſiah Hungerford,					

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(*b*) *This pious and uſeful brother in the miniſtry, died October* 19, 1796 *in the* 33*d year of his age.*

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." *Revelation.*

		Added	Dismi.	Exclud	Dead.	Numb
Plainfield,	* NATHANIEL COLE,					
	Jenks Maſon,		6	7		82
	Peter Kindal,					
Killingly,	PETER ROGERS,					
	Jonathan Herrington,					62
		32	28	24	20	1976

N. B. The laſt church was received the preſent ſeſſion.

4. Read the letters from ſiſter aſſociations. From the Philadelphian we received no intelligence. From the Shaftſbury, we received a letter and minutes, by their meſſenger, brother Stephen Olmſted. A letter, but no minutes, from the Warren, by their meſſenger, brother Robert Stanton. From the Danbury a letter, but no minutes, by their meſſenger, brother Jonathan Smith. A letter and minutes, but no meſſenger, from the New-York. Theſe meſſengers, with other brethren preſent, were invited to ſit in council with us.

5. The circular letter, prepared by brother Abel Palmer; and the correſponding letter, drawn by brother Amos Wells; were read and referred to a committee.

6. Appointed brother Simeon Dickinſon to write the circular letter for next year, and brother Peter Rogers the letter of correſpondence.

7. Choſe the following brethren our meſſengers to our ſiſter aſſociations. To the Danbury, brethren Watrous and Arnold. To the Shaftſbury, brethren Pardon Tillinghaſt and Sands Perkins. To the New-York, brethren Valentine W. Rathbun and Simeon Dickinſon. To the Warren, brethren Valentine W. Rathbun and Robert Stanton.

8. The clerk is requeſted to forward our minutes to the Philadelphian aſſociation.

Adjourned until nine o'clock to morrow morning.

Public worſhip this evening in various parts of the vicinity.

Wedneſday, October 19th.

Met according to adjournment, and

1. Sermon by brother Simeon Dickinſon, from 2 Cor. iv. 5 "*For we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord; and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake.*"

2. The circular and correſponding letters, as reviſed by our committee, were read and accepted. Voted, that they be printed with our minutes.

3. Agreed to the following ſupplies:—

2d. COLCHESTER.

Brother Peter Rogers, the firſt Lord's Day in April.

RICHMOND.

Brother Simeon Brown, fourth in Nov. and fourth in April.

—— Zadock Darrow, fourth in May.

—— Valentine W. Rathbun, third in July.

—— Simeon Dickinſon, fourth in Auguſt.

—— Amos Wells, fourth in September.

EXETER.

Brother Simeon Brown, firſt in December.
—— Zadock Darrow, firſt in June.
—— Peter Rogers, firſt in July.

4. A query from the church at Hampton—"Whether, a perſon immerſed in water, in the name of the *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Ghoſt*, by a man that hath not been ordained by laying on of hands in apoſtolic order, neither giveth evidence of a diſpenſation of the goſpel being committed unto him, ought to be received as a baptized perſon?" Voted, to defer this query to our next annual convention.

5. Brother Valentine W. Rathbun is requeſted to ſuperintend the printing of the minutes.

6. Voted to hold our next aſſociation at brother Darrow's meeting-houſe, in New-London, the third Tueſday in October, 1797.

Buſineſs being finiſhed, brother Simeon Brown concluded by prayer.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Elders and Meſſengers of the Stonington Aſſociation, met at Groton, on the 18th and 19th days of October, 1796.
To the Churches they repreſent.

BELOVED BRETHREN, BY the protection and ſmiles of heaven, we have been preſerved one year more; and have now enjoyed another comfortable anniverſary interview. We have had tidings from the ſeveral churches; and have received letters from ſome of our ſiſter aſſociations. We have received ſome agreeable intelligence from abroad, notwithſtanding the enemy rages in many places, who, yet "goeth about as a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour." Altho' "no weapon that is formed againſt Zion ſhall proſper;" the enemy is unwearied, in forming ſchemes, and executing plans, "to ſeduce, if it were poſſible, even the elect." In the former ages of the church, the devil was diſpoſed to uſe the ſcriptures, to anſwer his purpoſes, and to ſay, "*it is written;*" he appeared in the character of an angel of light, and ſo deceived ſouls, and a flood of errors (conſequently) was broached—The air was darkened—The churches were poiſoned—The ſons of Zion were wounded, and diviſions, and ſubdiviſions, took place, to the grief of the ſincere followers of the *Lamb*.

Sometimes, Satan attempted to ſet aſide one part of the ſcriptures, and ſometimes another; but the time is now come, when he preſumes (daringly) to caſt contempt on all the ſacred volume: and the dividing line will be drawn, (not between the ſeveral denominations of chriſtians; but) between chriſtians and infidels, for the *Bible* is the contempt and jeſt of many: even ſome leading characters in town and ſtate, treat it with neglect, diſregard and contempt.

Will not theſe things, ſerve (as a mean) to unite real chriſtians, of all denominations, (however they may diſagree in ſome leſſer matters of the law) and influence them to engage in the war, to "contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints?" The *holy ſcriptures*—how precious is that ſacred volume! As it is the invention of he *Holy Ghoſt*, it is full of infinite wiſdom and eloquence, even the wiſdom and eloquence of the great author: it is the counſellor and

comforter of the ſaints, in the houſe of their pilgrimage, and therefore it is not only our duty to read it, as is the command of our Lord; but it is our great privilege and unſpeakable happineſs, that we have it to read. No man ever drank too much of this water of life, or fed too much on this bread of life: better for us, to want the light of the ſun, than the light of the *holy ſcriptures:* therefore, dear brethren, the more that precious book is contemned by infidels, the more we ſhall be ſenſible of our love to it, if we perſevere in religion. It "is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path." "The entrance of thy words," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, "giveth light: it giveth underſtanding unto the ſimple." Pſalm cxix. 105, 130. Yea, ſaith Solomon, "The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of inſtruction are the way of life." Prov. vi. 23. Again, "We have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that ſhineth in a dark place." 2. Pet. i. 19.

Let us conſider the efficacy of *God's word.* On whom doth it not work, either for life, as unto the receiver; or for death, unto the rejector thereof? Doth it not convert the unregenerate, and reſtore the regenerate? Do not the awful denunciations therein, tend to humble the impenitent; while the precious promiſes ſerve to refreſh the true believer? Where is the ſwearer—drunkard—adulterer—oppreſſor—extortioner, or perſecutor, whoſe hard heart this hammer cannot ſoften? Where are the covetous—licentious—rebellious—injurious—malicious—envious—ambitious—ſuperſtitious—idolatrous—ſubtle—furious—haughty, and crafty, whoſe corruptions, this ſword of the *Spirit* cannot ſubdue? It affords conſolation to the moſt dejected and ſorrowful. By it, the ſcruples of the moſt doubtful may be removed. And, by it, the moſt weary and heavy laden with ſin, are directed to *Chriſt* for relief.

Let us alſo conſider the utility of the ſacred ſcriptures. They convey "the form of ſound words." They "are able to make wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is in *Chriſt Jeſus.* All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: that the man of *God* may be perfect throughly furniſhed unto all good works." 2. Tim. i. 13. and iii. 15, 16, 17. "Whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the ſcriptures, might have hope." Rom. xv. 4. "Theſe are written that ye might believe that *Jeſus* is the *Chriſt*, the *Son* of *God*, and that believing ye might have life through *his name.*" John xx. 31. By theſe, we are regenerated. "Of *his* own will begat *he* us, with the *word* of *truth.*" Jam. i. 18. "Being born again not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible, by the word of *God*, which liveth, and abideth forever." 1. Pet. i. 23. By theſe, we are delivered from the bondage of ſin. "If ye continue in my word, *ſaith our Savior*, ye ſhall know the truth, and the truth ſhall make you free," John viii. 31, 32. This word, adminiſters happineſs. "Bleſſed is the man that meditateth in the law of the *Lord* day and night."

This is a word of illumination—a word of reconciliation—a word of life. This is the inſtrument that begetteth faith; "for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. x. 17.

This is a word of ſalvation; for "the goſpel of *Chriſt* is the power of *God* unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth." Rom. i. 16. "Receive with meekneſs the ingrafted word, which is able to ſave your ſouls." Jam. i. 21. It is the flower and quinteſſence of ſoul-ſaving wiſdom; for the ſacred ſcripture, is the infallible rule of faith—the unmoveable ground of hope—the perfect guide of life—the ſoul's ſtore-houſe of proviſions—the ſpiritual arſenal of munition—the ſacred fuel of devotion, and the everlaſting ſpring of celeſtial conſolation. There, are divine ſubjects for the contemplative mind. All that is there taught, is truth. All that is there commanded, is goodneſs. All that is there promiſed, is happineſs. This word, is to the blind, a light—to them that wander, a guide—to them that are in diſtreſs, a conſolation—to them that doubt, a counſellor, and to the unlearned, a teacher. This is the ſeed, whereby we are begotten, and the balm, whereby we are refreſhed. As the ſun is to the world, ſo is the word to the church: The light of our life, and the life of our ſouls. This is bread, to feed us—drink, to quench our thirſt—fire, to purge us—oil, to ſoften us—a ſtaff, to uphold us—a treaſure, to enrich us—a light to direct us—a guide to conduct us—a weapon to defend us—flagons of wine, and apples, to comfort us: and time would fail us, to tell you of all the advantages ariſing therefrom; but while we read, we may exult and ſay,—Oh, the height, and the depth of the ſacred ſcriptures! And while many diſpute their authority, let us prize them as we ought, and adore the author.

"Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things. Thoſe things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and ſeen in" the ſcriptures, "do: and the *God* of peace ſhall be with you." Amen.

Corresponding Letter.

The Stonington Aſſociation, to the Correſponding Aſſociations, ſendeth chriſtian ſalutation.

Dear Brethren, IF *God* is the higheſt perfection of happineſs, and the beſt poſſible good to his creatures; it is altogether reaſonable that *his* intelligent creatures, ſhould not only acknowledge *him*, as the fountain of all good; but as their proper object of adoration and praiſe: whoſe high prerogative it is, to claim, and *he* doth juſtly deſerve, the ſincere affections of every human heart; and that, to be exerciſed upon *his* adorable perfections, with unabated zeal.

Without real love, and affection to *God* and *his* cauſe—without a true reliſh for real revealed religion: we cannot be in a ſure place of defence, nor in an actual readineſs, to oppoſe the "*Man* of *ſin*," with his iniquitous errors, that not only threaten us, as near at hand; but are already "come in like a flood." It may (perhaps) be conſidered a daringly brave oppoſition to ſuperior numbers; but it is truly a chriſtian enterpriſe to ſtem the torrent of infidelity, and immorality, peculiar to the age, in which we live. Although we are

not directly threatened with the whipping poſt—with the dungeon—with fire, or with the ſword: it is abundantly manifeſt, that ſatan has not loſt his influence, nor unreconciled ſinners the enmity of their hearts. Satan is yet induſtriouſly engaged, to deſtroy (if poſſible) vital piety, from the earth. And if fire, and the ſword, are laid aſide, and ſatan, and his emiſſaries, ceaſe, thereby, to threaten death, and ſlaughter, to the faithful witneſſes of *God*; it is not that devils, or wicked men (as ſuch) have any better reliſh for pure and undefiled religion; but by being ſuppreſſed by the over-ruling hand of *God* in *his providence*, their engines of deſtruction are laid aſide, and the *beaſt* is diſcomfited; but ſatan not being bound, the wound of the beaſt (tho' deadly) appears preſently to be healed, and ſatan and his accomplices, are aſſiduouſly employed, in proſecuting a plan, tho' widely different, yet, in its conſequences, equal with the ſword, to be dreaded: for although the witneſſes ceaſe to bleed on the ſcaffold, and are not conſumed in the flames, yet inſtead of the flames, and the ſcaffold, are not fraud, and flatteries introduced; and thereby, a plan, more deeply laid, to ſeduce, and deſtroy mankind: in which ſatan and ſinners, too often ſucceed and triumph; having by the artful practice of fraud, and fawning flatteries, carried captive, the ſimple, while the unguarded heart, was not prepared for ſo potent a foe, and ſo ſecret, but powerful an attack. Our religious rights, and privileges, are inexpreſſibly good and great; and to abuſe thoſe privileges, to licentiouſneſs, by liſtening and giving heed, to the alluring charms of an enemy, is the height of folly, and madneſs: and yet, we have reaſon to fear, that this is too often the caſe! While the flattering world, preſents the ſenſual bait, ſatan urges to embrace it, and the treacherous heart longs to graſp the imaginary good:

Which when embrac'd,
Affords no real joy;
But wailing! Samſon like,
The loſs of eyes and ſtrength:

and then, alas, what bondage—what ſlavery and ſervitude, follows! Indeed, what more to be dreaded, or what, more fatal, to the profeſſors of chriſtianity, than to be led aſtray, by this flood of fraud, and flatteries; and inſtead of being detached from the world, are ſhamefully conformed to the vain faſhions, and cuſtoms thereof, and ſo are in a prepared readineſs, to imbibe the prevailing errors of the age. Beloved Brethren, we have need of chriſtian fortitude; yea, a ſoul inſpired with ſacred zeal, even to attempt (as inſtruments) to correct the many errors of the people, inclined to forſake the ways of *God* and religion, and to run with mad career in the road to perdition. And if we would conteſt the point with the enemy, and cover him with deſerved ſhame, we muſt (according to the direction of the apoſtle) put on the whole armour of *God*," &c. Eph. vi. 10, 18. And that the evil weeds of infidelity, and other prevailing errors, may be rooted out, we conſider it neceſſary, dear Brethren, that we exert ourſelves, in the fear of the *Lord*, truſting alone in *God*; and that we do our utmoſt endeavour, by the ſacred influence of ſcripture and enlightened reaſon, to ſilence gainſayers; which is not effected by rage

and violence—not by fraud and falſhood—not by ſlander and unbecoming language—nor yet, by calling in the power of the civil magiſtrate, and the ſword to aſſiſt us: *Jeſus* hath not allowed his followers, ſuch weapons as theſe; but thoſe of a far different kind, "the ſword of the *Spirit*, which is the word of *God*;" and which, if uſed with ſkill, and wielded with chriſtian valor (exerciſing love to *God*, and love to man,) will not fail of execution; but will pull down the ſtrong holds of ſatan, and "quench the fiery darts of the wicked." Let us then, while we "contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints," ſee that we poſſeſs the charming grace of charity, which "never faileth:" And although men and devils, or all the powers of darkneſs, do their worſt; the religion of *Jeſus* will live: Yea, while the *Lord* omnipotent reigneth, *his* cauſe will be ſupported: And bleſſed be *God*, dear Brethren, we believe there are men and ſocieties, in this age, made and formed, for the glorious purpoſe of defending and ſupporting (inſtrumentally) the chriſtian religion; may everlaſting ſucceſs attend their zeal: and may we, by the ſacred influence of the *Holy Spirit*, be enabled to live our religion, and to triumph over our foes on earth: and may we finally obtain a compleat victory over ALL our enemies, and reign forever, with the captain of our ſalvation, in the world of bliſs and glory. Amen.

Signed in behalf of the Aſſociation,

ABEL PALMER, Moderator.
ASA SPALDING, Clerk.

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